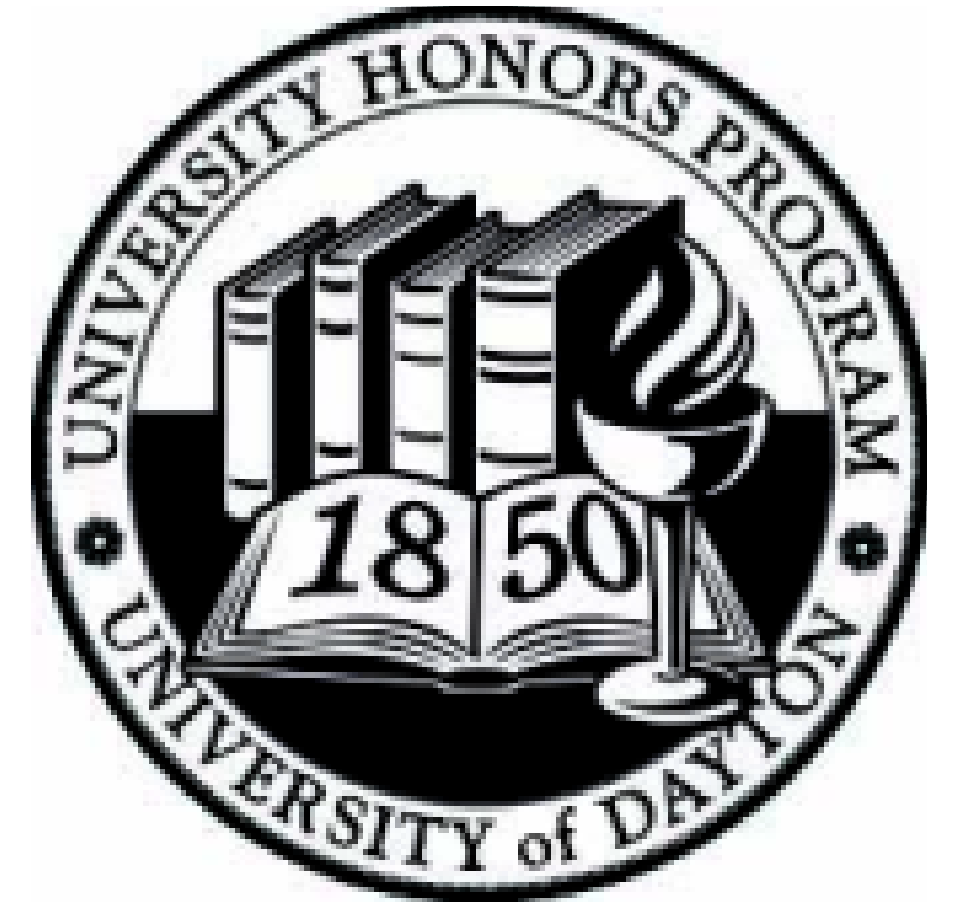




Examining the Role of Self-esteem in the Association between Emotional Vulnerability and Psychological Well-being

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Emotional Vulnerability

Emotional vulnerability (EV) is defined as the degree to which a person renders himself or herself exposed to the emotional pain of rejection.

Vulnerability is an important trait essential to satisfying the human need to create and maintain close relationships. (Clark & Lemay 2008).

The present research examined whether self-esteem influences whether EV is associated with positive or negative psychological well-being.

Method

Participants were 68 (75% female) University of Dayton undergraduate students participating in exchange for course credit.

All participants first completed the following measures:

- Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), $\alpha = .85$
- Self-compassion Scale (Neff & Van Gucht, 2011), $\alpha = .75$
- Rejection Sensitivity Scale (Downy & Feldman, 1996), $\alpha = .87$
- Inclusion of Other in Self Scale (Aron & Smollan, 1992)

Participants were assigned to:

- write about a time the felt emotionally vulnerable
- describe their average Tuesday (control group)

Method (continued)

To assess psychological well-being, participants then completed the Ryff Scale of Psychological Well-being (Ryff 1989).

The Ryff measures has 6 subscales that assess different dimensions of psychological well-being:

- Autonomy, $\alpha = .88$
- Environmental mastery, $\alpha = .81$
- Personal growth, $\alpha = .81$
- Positive relations with others, $\alpha = .83$
- Purpose in life, $\alpha = .82$
- Self-acceptance, $\alpha = .85$

Table 1.

Bivariate Correlations between Self-Esteem and the Psychological Well-Being Subscales.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Self-Esteem	--						
2. Autonomy	.34**	--					
3. Environmental Mastery	.61**	.31*	--				
4. Personal Growth	.50**	.23	.53**	--			
5. Positive Relations with Others	.38**	.10	.53**	.57**	--		
6. Purpose in Life	.53**	.22	.70**	.55**	.56**	--	
7. Self-Acceptance	.81**	.23	.68**	.62**	.57**	.60**	--

Note: * = $p < .05$. ** = $p < .01$.

Results

We predicted that the level of self-esteem would interact with condition to predict well-being.

- People with higher self-esteem should report better psychological well-being after writing about EV compared to people with lower self-esteem.

Results (continued)

Self-esteem was positively associated with well-being for the following sub scales:

- Autonomy $t(67) = -8.80, p < .001$
- Environmental Mastery $t(67) = -15.7, p < .001$
- Personal Growth $t(67) = -22.3, p < .001$
- Positive Relations With Others $t(67) = -18.9.7, p < .001$
- Purpose in Life $t(67) = -17.2, p < .001$
- Self-Acceptance $t(67) = -22.9, p < .001$

Table 1 includes the correlations between self-esteem and each psychological well-being subscale.

Conclusion

We found that participants who reflected on a time of EV did not report a better well-being than the control.

Instead, people with higher trait self-esteem expressed a higher level of well-being.

Selected References

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- McNulty, J.K., & Fincham, F.D. (2012). *Beyond positive psychology?: Toward a contextual view of psychological processes and well-being* (english). *American Psychology*., 67(2), 101-110. doi:10.1037/1065- 9293.59.4.286